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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Seventeenth session

Summary record of the 311th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 29 March 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Degener

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of Jordan (*continued*) (CRPD/C/JOR/1; CRPD/C/JOR/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Jordan took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 11-20

2. **Mr. Alazzeh** (Jordan), replying to questions asked at the previous meeting, said that Jordan had not entered a reservation to article 12 or any other provision of the Convention. The new bill on the rights of persons with disabilities would make prior and informed consent mandatory for all decisions regarding a person with a disability. Naturally, the policy would entail training professionals in the use not only of sign language but also of methods for communicating with persons with severe intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. The Central Bank of Jordan was one of the few to have issued clear instructions regarding independent access for persons with disabilities to banking and credit services, including via the Internet. Fingerprint access was available for blind persons, who had previously needed to have a witness present in order to conduct transactions.

3. It was important to bear in mind that the pejorative terms used of persons with disabilities in certain laws had been derived from Islamic jurisprudence in an era when those terms lacked their current negative connotations. A complete terminological overhaul was under way and a time frame had been set for bringing the country's laws into line with constitutional principles.

4. Article 47 of the Health Code was a common provision conferring on the Ministry of Health the authority to confine persons with psychosocial impairments if they constituted a threat to themselves or others. However, the new bill on the rights of persons with disabilities would nullify the provision and prohibit involuntary institutionalization. There were no specific data on the number of persons institutionalized against their will, but it was not a widespread practice and the country had very few psychiatric hospitals.

5. The State did not have the authority to intervene in private matters such as a person's choice of spouse. However, the Ministry of Health was raising awareness of the potential risks to the offspring of consanguineous marriages.

6. While the Nationality Code did specify that an applicant had to be legally competent in order to obtain citizenship, the provision did not specifically target persons with disabilities. The new bill dealt in detail with the legal competence of persons with disabilities, which it recognized in full. It also addressed the issue of the right of persons with psychosocial impairments to vote and stand for election.

7. Referring to reports of a case in which a deaf woman had been raped and had then been denied her choice of sign language interpreter during the subsequent legal proceedings, he said that the Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities was aware of the matter and had been in contact with the competent authorities. It should be noted, however, that the case did not involve rape as the act had not been completed and that the woman did not know sign language because she also had a partial visual impairment. As a result, she had been referred to an association that had experience of assisting deaf-blind persons. It would be inappropriate to comment further since the case was still before the courts.

8. **Ms. Alhares** (Jordan) said that the 114 emergency hotline was linked to the command centre of the Public Security Directorate, which then referred callers to the appropriate department. Deaf persons could use a video link to communicate with hotline staff. The Directorate provided its staff with training in the use of sign language and on the legal provisions pertaining to persons with disabilities. Evacuation plans were in place for persons with disabilities in the event of an emergency, and action was being taken in follow-up to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

9. The migration flow management plan 2016-2019 placed particular focus on children, women and older persons with disabilities. Some non-governmental organizations provided assistance to refugees and migrants with disabilities and had been calling on donors to ensure that services and donations also took account of those groups. Although the figures fluctuated, there were around 19,000 Syrian refugees with disabilities living in camps in Jordan, but many others lived outside the camps.

10. By law, competence in the area of housing was distributed among various authorities and ministries, which were required to make the necessary accommodations for persons with disabilities. Queen Alia International Airport was a modern airport with aircraft boarding tunnels, lifts and adapted toilet facilities. Nevertheless, better signage was needed. Although the provisions of the Convention had been incorporated into the National Building Code, most buildings were fairly old and therefore had to be retrofitted to make them accessible, which implied a considerable outlay. The country's topography and the fact that many buildings were listed also needed to be taken into account. A 10-year national plan on accessibility would come into effect once the new bill on the rights of persons with disabilities was enacted. The Government and civil society were working together to raise awareness of the issue, and the University of Jordan had made huge strides, putting it in the top 500 universities worldwide in terms of accessibility.

11. **Mr. Zabet** (Jordan) said that laws had been adopted to promote independent living and social integration, although those goals were harder to achieve for persons with certain types of disability. Capacity-building and technical support from the international community would be very helpful in that regard. Instructions would be issued in 2017 regarding customs duties on equipment for persons with disabilities. Tangible steps were being taken, including the establishment of a committee on family integration and the provision of training for parents, to facilitate the shift from the institutionalization of persons with disabilities to their integration into the family and community. Some 300 persons with disabilities would be taken out of institutions in the near future and another 200 would be placed with foster families.

12. The Government was especially attentive to the issue of violence in private institutions. The Ministry of Social Development had taken steps to protect persons with disabilities, strengthen oversight of shelters and raise awareness of the problem among families of persons with disabilities. Eighteen monitoring visits had been conducted to institutions thus far and guidance had been issued, for example on ensuring the quality of food. An independent team, including representatives of civil society, had been set up to carry out inspections and follow up on the implementation of any recommendations made in that context. Institutions found to be lacking would be sanctioned and could face closure depending on the severity of the violations. Thus far, 16 cases of violations of the rights of persons with disabilities in shelters had been investigated.

13. **Ms. Alhares** (Jordan) said that the new bill on the rights of persons with disabilities provided for the development of a comprehensive national plan to limit the number of institutions. The plan would also envisage alternatives to institutionalization, such as placement in host families, community-based rehabilitation and early intervention, and promote the development of inclusive education as a means of furthering integration. The goal was to move towards the provision of disability-related services on an outpatient basis. The five remaining institutions under the remit of the Ministry of Social Development would be upgraded.

14. **Mr. Alazzeh** (Jordan), referring to a comment that laws against domestic violence were of limited effectiveness because the issue was traditionally considered a private matter, said that the law always took precedence over custom in Jordan. However, customs could not be changed overnight. A number of practical steps had been taken to prevent domestic violence, including the establishment of a department dedicated to that cause, which also provided support to victims.

15. Regarding the allegation that corruption prevented persons with disabilities from exercising their rights, he wished to emphasize that the recycling of uncorroborated claims did not serve the purpose of the interactive dialogue. The Government of course acknowledged that there were considerable challenges in implementing the Convention, but

those challenges had chiefly to do with the country's limited financial resources, which had been further strained by the massive influx of Syrian refugees.

16. **Ms. Haj-Yasin** (Jordan) said that legal assistance, to which persons with disabilities were entitled, was provided by the Ministry of Justice and civil society organizations. The Ministry ensured that the rights of persons with disabilities were taken into account in its strategies and budget. Two training programmes on facilitating access to justice and legal assistance had been run for judges, prosecutors and officials of the justice system. The Government was expanding the protection of persons with disabilities, including women, and the Criminal Code had been amended to make disability an aggravating circumstance for offences involving sexual violence. The new bill on the rights of persons with disabilities would introduce a definition of violence that covered violations of physical integrity. The Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities was preparing a nationwide study of reproductive health with a view to closing gaps in the protection of women's reproductive health rights.

17. **Mr. Alazzeh** (Jordan) said, regarding violence against women, that the law, especially the new bill, contained a host of provisions requiring all ministries to train their staff, not only in dealing with cases of violence but also in preventing them. Detailed information on the matter was provided in the replies to the list of issues (CRPD/C/JOR/Q/1/Add.1). One of the innovations of the bill was to support persons with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, in protecting themselves against and communicating about violence and sexual harassment.

18. In the field of disaster response, it was true that the main recipients of training on disability issues were members of the Civil Defence Department. However, training was provided to a number of other professionals in other contexts as well.

19. Persons with disabilities were not appointed to the judiciary because there had previously been a statutory physical fitness requirement. However, the new bill stated that persons with disabilities were physically capable and competent to take up such posts, as well as other positions in the public and private sectors. He hoped that all restrictions related to physical fitness would be removed in 2017. Persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities were not currently represented on the Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities, but, with the adoption by the Ministry of Health of a national mental health plan and a general shift since 2010 in how mental health issues were addressed, that shortcoming should be corrected soon. In addition, persons with psychosocial disabilities had established an association, the first of its kind in the Middle East.

20. The practice of shooting guns in the air during celebrations was on the decline, and the King himself had stated publicly that anyone who was not a member of law enforcement and who discharged a weapon would be held accountable, regardless of the motive. Statistics were not kept on the number of disabilities resulting from such incidents, but cases were isolated and in no way amounted to a trend.

21. The Higher Council's major achievements included its participation in the reporting process and the interactive dialogue with the Committee, which was testament to the leaps made since 2007. Although changing mindsets was a long-term endeavour, there was a strong political will to make the rights of persons with disabilities a national priority. The new bill had been developed through consultation with all stakeholders, including children, public servants, the private sector, academia and civil society.

22. **Mr. Magableh** (National Centre for Human Rights, Jordan), speaking via video link from Jordan, said that Jordan still had not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention despite having signed it in 2007 and that the budget remained inadequate to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities. Some of the National Centre's key concerns with regard to the rights of persons with disabilities were: the number of laws still to be brought into line with the Convention; the lack of accommodations made in, inter alia, courts, temporary detention centres and rehabilitation facilities, and the inability of staff in such places to cater for disability-specific needs; the low level of the allowances paid to the families of persons with disabilities; the lack of job opportunities for persons with disabilities in either the private or public sector; the inaccessibility of public and private buildings; the exposure of persons with disabilities to violence both within and outside the family, and the lack of

enforcement of protection laws; the poor quality of rehabilitation services and the shortage of specialized physiotherapy centres; the inadequate provision for early detection in some parts of the country; the inaccessibility of polling stations and electoral messaging, and the lack of representation in decision-making bodies; and the inaccessibility of education and the under-enrolment of children with disabilities.

Articles 21-33

23. **Mr. Ishikawa** asked how the State party promoted community-based inclusive development with a multisectoral approach.

24. **Mr. Ruskus**, noting that the rate of employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector was less than 1 per cent, asked what incentives were in place for public and private sector employers to recruit persons with disabilities and provide them with reasonable accommodation. He also wished to know what percentage of women with disabilities were employed compared with men and what efforts were being made to promote the employment of women with disabilities and to ensure gender equality in employment.

25. **Mr. Buntan** said that he would appreciate clarification of the legal status of Braille and sign language. Noting that deaf persons could access information only through one particular brand of videophone, he asked how the State party safeguarded the right to information of persons who used other models. It would be useful to learn what percentage of students with disabilities attended mainstream schools and special schools, respectively; how existing special schools were being reformed so that they could play a role in the inclusive education system; and what barriers deaf persons faced with regard to higher education. He also wished to know how the State party linked its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals with its obligations under the Convention. Lastly, he wondered to what extent information on sexual and reproductive health rights and services was available in accessible formats.

26. **Mr. Parra Dussan** asked whether children with disabilities were barred from secular education and whether education was inclusive for both girls and boys with disabilities. He also wished to know whether persons with disabilities fully enjoyed their right to participate in political life.

27. **Mr. Langvad** asked whether persons with disabilities, especially those with psychosocial disabilities, had access to private health insurance and, if so, what the extent of the coverage was and whether men and women were treated equally in that domain.

28. **Mr. Alsaif** said that the Committee would welcome information on measures taken in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 3 and on training provided to health-care professionals on the rights of persons with disabilities. He enquired how persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were involved in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. **Mr. Kabue** said that he would like to know what steps had been taken to ensure that information provided to the public was accessible to persons with disabilities who required alternative methods of communication and to inform deaf persons about the increasing use of sign language and the arrangements regarding accreditation of sign language interpreters. The Committee was deeply concerned that around 79 per cent of children with disabilities were unable to fully exercise their right to education. Would the Government take immediate action to address that issue, without waiting for new legislation to be enacted? It was unclear how health services catered for persons with disabilities; information would be appreciated, for example, on whether health care was free and facilities were accessible. Lastly, he asked what measures were being taken to reduce the high level of unemployment among persons with disabilities.

30. **Mr. Martin** enquired whether the bill on the rights of persons with disabilities would cover the provision of information in easy-to-read formats and whether public information, for example on voting procedures, was already provided in accessible formats of that kind.

31. **Mr. Basharu** said that the Committee would welcome information on concrete statutory measures adopted to prevent the forced sterilization of women and girls with disabilities. Reports had been received that, since 2011, children who were deaf or blind had been unable to study for secondary education qualifications in subjects such as mathematics. He wished to know why those students were excluded and what was being done to provide teachers with the requisite training on catering for their needs.

32. He would appreciate details of efforts to ensure that the hotline providing information on polling stations was accessible for deaf persons and on any plans to amend the Electoral Act to allow persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities to participate in elections. Further information on national implementation and monitoring and on the roles of the Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities and the National Centre for Human Rights would be welcome.

33. **Mr. Rukhledev** asked what steps had been taken to ensure the accessibility of sports facilities and cultural venues, whether persons with disabilities, including children, were able to attend large sporting events, and whether the artistic creations of persons with disabilities had been exhibited.

34. **Mr. Kim** Hyung Shik, highlighting the low reported rate of disability in Jordan, asked whether the State party planned to bring its data-collection methods into line with the Committee's recommendations by further disaggregating the data and incorporating a human rights approach to the definition of disability. It would be interesting to hear about ways in which persons with disabilities and their representative organizations had been actively involved in designing, implementing and monitoring international cooperation projects and about plans to promote their participation in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals related to disability.

35. **Mr. Chaker**, noting that the bill on the rights of persons with disabilities contained provisions on non-discrimination, asked whether the Government had considered including provisions on inclusive education for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.

36. **Mr. You** Liang enquired what steps were being taken to reduce poverty among persons with disabilities, whether the State party had made efforts to link its implementation of the Convention with its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and what initiatives were under way to enable persons with disabilities to develop their abilities in the field of performing arts.

37. **Mr. Pyaneandee** said that the delegation should clarify how the State party intended to implement article 23 with respect to adoption and how the current adoption system operated. With regard to article 24, he would appreciate further information on continuous curriculum development and in-service training of teachers and support staff in mainstream schools; it would also be useful to know whether there was an itemized yearly budget for the implementation of that article. Lastly, noting the importance of disaggregated data for the development of policies and programmes, he asked how the Government proposed to implement article 31, bearing in mind the specific challenges faced by the State party, such as the impact of refugee flows on national statistics.

38. **Mr. Tatić**, welcoming the inclusion of fixed deadlines in the bill on the rights of persons with disabilities, said that it would be helpful to know whether budgets had been drawn up and resources set aside for implementation of the bill to ensure that those deadlines were met. The Government should consider specifying in the bill which existing laws were not in line with the Convention and whether they would be amended or revoked following the bill's enactment.

39. He asked whether the State party had earmarked financial resources for the removal of barriers faced by persons with disabilities and whether it was engaged in international cooperation to improve the accessibility of heritage sites or had considered exchanging information with countries that possessed experience in that area. He also wished to know whether all social housing for persons with disabilities was compliant with the National Building Code for Persons with Disabilities. Lastly, information would be appreciated on the outcomes of investigations into alleged violations of the rights of women and girls with

disabilities and proceedings initiated by the National Centre for Human Rights for failure to provide reasonable accommodation in the workplace.

40. **The Chair**, noting that the Committee remained concerned about reports of torture and ill-treatment of persons with psychosocial disabilities in mental health institutions and women with disabilities under protective custody, enquired how many women with disabilities were under protective custody, whether the bill on the rights of persons with disabilities would enable authorities to investigate physical and sexual abuse of persons with psychosocial disabilities in health-care settings, and whether investigators would view such violations through the lens of discriminatory torture and ill-treatment.

The meeting was suspended at 11.50 a.m. and resumed at 12.15 p.m.

41. **Mr. Alazzeh** (Jordan) said that all persons, including persons with disabilities, were protected against torture and ill-treatment and against exploitation, violence and abuse by the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure. Moreover, under recent amendments to the Criminal Code, offences committed on the basis of disability were considered aggravated offences and therefore punished more severely. The Code of Criminal Procedure had also been amended to ensure that, if a crime was committed against a person with an intellectual or psychosocial disability, it was incumbent on the authorities to initiate proceedings, regardless of whether a complaint had been lodged by the victim's family.

42. Although he was aware of concerns about the use of certain prescription drugs to treat persons with psychosocial disabilities, the cases of torture that had been reported by the National Centre for Human Rights had not, to his knowledge, concerned mental health institutions. There was no evidence that torture, as defined in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, had taken place in such contexts. The Government would investigate any cases of torture or ill-treatment that were reported.

43. The National Council for Family Affairs was responsible for developing policies, proposing legislation and implementing programmes on the prevention of domestic violence against women with disabilities. The Government was working with the National Council and the Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities, with the support of various international and national organizations, to improve the protection of women with disabilities, including in shelters. It was also conducting surveys to determine why victims were reluctant or unable to lodge complaints.

44. In Jordan, schools and curricula were neither religious nor secular; religion was taught alongside other subjects. Constraints faced by persons with disabilities in the field of education were not related to the issue of religion.

45. The roles of the Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities and the National Centre for Human Rights were complementary: the first was responsible for developing policies, proposing legislation and coordinating the implementation of the Convention, while the second was in charge of monitoring the overall human rights situation in the country, processing complaints of human rights violations and preparing national reports pursuant to international human rights instruments, including on matters relating to persons with disabilities.

46. Once enacted, the bill on the rights of persons with disabilities would rescind and supersede previous legislation; there was no need to amend it to include additional information on existing legislation.

47. The public and private sectors were being encouraged by the Government to view accessible tourism as a profitable investment. In some cases, technical expertise and considerable financial resources were required to overcome geographical constraints. His country would welcome financial and technical support from specialized international organizations for projects to improve the accessibility of archaeological sites.

48. Efforts had been made by the Independent Electoral Commission to ensure that sign language interpreting was provided in polling stations. All premises used as polling stations in the forthcoming elections would be completely accessible for persons with disabilities. It

was worth noting that the linguistic complexity of Arabic was one of the reasons why sign language was not more widely used in Jordan.

49. **Ms. Alhares** (Jordan), noting that, according to the national census of 2015, 11.2 per cent of persons aged 5 years and over had a disability, said that the proportion of children under the age of 5 years old with disabilities was likely to be similar. There were around 19,000 students with disabilities in mainstream schools and 22,000 students with disabilities in private schools. Statistics on the employment of persons with disabilities were contained in paragraph 29 of her country's replies to the list of issues. In 2015, 76 per cent of persons with disabilities had been out of work.

50. Discussions had been held on improving access to the voting information hotline for persons who were deaf or hard of hearing; unfortunately, there were constraints regarding the types of mobile telephone that could be used by such persons. Data on social housing and on the sexual and reproductive health of women with disabilities were not yet available. However, the findings of a study conducted in 2016, covering topics such as sexual and reproductive health education for adolescents and the medical examination required before marriage, would be published shortly. The Government provided training to those working at the Ministry of Health on the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

51. **Mr. Zabet** (Jordan) said that a number of steps had been taken to protect women from domestic violence. The National Centre for Human Rights had increased the number of family visits conducted to follow up on cases of domestic violence. A bill to combat domestic violence and to improve the protection and social reintegration of victims should be passed in 2017.

52. In order to combat poverty among persons with disabilities, the Government provided financial support through the National Assistance Fund to 18,000 families of persons with disabilities. In the context of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, persons with disabilities and civil society organizations throughout the country were being included in the drafting of development plans and policies. The Ministry of Social Development had set up several programmes to enable persons with disabilities to have access to all necessary services and be fully integrated into society.

53. **Mr. Masaiteh** (Jordan) said that the Government was aware of the need to provide training that would enable teachers to acquire the skills necessary to teach subjects such as mathematics to students with visual or hearing impairments. It had undertaken a study of the methods employed in other countries, such as the use of Braille to teach mathematics. Progress could also be made by consulting students with disabilities themselves on their needs and by conducting awareness-raising campaigns to change the attitudes of teachers and students towards persons with disabilities. In that regard, the Ministry of Education had held a number of workshops in which persons with disabilities had been involved. It was worth noting that there were legal restrictions on the extent to which rented buildings could be renovated to cater for persons with disabilities.

54. **Ms. Haj-Yasin** (Jordan) said that, in addition to developing the "30 Questions Guide" on accessible and non-discriminatory appointment processes, referred to in the replies to the list of issues, the Civil Service Bureau had established a sign language hotline for persons with disabilities seeking information relating to job applications. Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour had introduced a new employment plan for persons with disabilities, including new regulations on flexible working arrangements.

55. **Mr. Alazzeh** (Jordan) said that further measures were required to make sports facilities and equipment more accessible. Plans to set up a special unit to improve the accessibility of cultural venues had not been successful, owing to a lack of technical capacity.

56. He trusted that the many programmes and action plans mentioned during the interactive dialogue demonstrated that the Government was not waiting for bills to be enacted before taking action on the rights of persons with disabilities, although it faced many constraints in so doing, notably financial ones. In that regard, it would be useful if donors and partners could propose more comprehensive international cooperation programmes that took into account the broader social and economic context — the

conditions in the agricultural sector, for ex
with disabilities. Lastly, he noted that seve
had established specific budgets for issues r

57. **Prince** Mired Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussei
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58. **Mr. Tatić** (Country Rapporteur), r
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The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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